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Talking Points for the A/DDI
21 October 1985

Aftermath of the Achille Lauro Incident

Role of Abul Abbas

The evidence is particularly strong that Palestine Liberation Front leader, Abul Abbas was involved in the planning of this terrorist incident and that the original plan was an attack against the Israeli port at Ashdod, the ship's next scheduled stop.

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- The plan apparently miscarried because the terrorists were discovered on board with their weapons.

We still have no definite word on the location of Abul Abbas.

- Abu Abbas will attend the PLO Executive Committee meeting expected to be held in Baghdad soon.

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Status of the PLO

PLO Chairman Arafat is facing increasing pressure from PLO hardliners to retaliate for the 1 October Israeli raid on PLO headquarters in Tunis and the US interception of the Achille Lauro hijackers.

- PLO hardliners, who have long advocated a more militant posture, almost certainly are in a stronger position in the wake of the US and Israeli operations.
- We judge that Arafat--in the interest of preserving Fatah unity--will yield to the hardliners' pressure and authorize more frequent and spectacular attacks on Israeli interests worldwide over the next several months.

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Terrorist Attacks Against US Interests

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United States interests--particularly in the Middle East and Europe--also are likely to become a primary target for various PLO factions seeking revenge for the US operation.

- The PLO may soon conclude that the only way to draw attention to its grievances with Israel and to demonstrate its viability as a national liberation movement is to stage attacks not only against Israel, but Israel's prime benefactor--the United States.
- We believe Arafat will try to resist demands to attack US interests--hoping to avoid further loss of international

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credibility--but he may not be able to head off freelance operations by PLO splinter groups.

- Arafat's Fatah organization has not attacked US interests since 1973, when the Black September Organization kidnapped and killed the US Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission in Khartoum. [REDACTED]

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Fallout in Egypt from Hijacking Episode

President Mubarak needs US aid too badly to break relations with Washington. The tough anti-US line he has been taking is primarily intended to forestall domestic criticism of his leadership and his role in the crisis.

- Mubarak will soon want to put bilateral relations back on track. We believe his private anger at the United States may already have peaked. [REDACTED]

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Mubarak does not enjoy a strong power base. [REDACTED]

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- Fundamentalists, as well as leftists, have led student demonstrators calling Mubarak a "coward" and demanding Egypt break with Israel and the US. Police crackdowns have contained the protesters, but harsh treatment of detainees risks touching off a cycle of demonstrations directed against the government. [REDACTED]

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Key groups have rallied behind Mubarak to give the appearance of national unity, but protracted demonstrations and police repression could prompt them to abandon him. [REDACTED]

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CIA Actions in Response to Achille Lauro Incident

Various DDI offices have provided papers on the Achille Lauro incident and its implications to senior government officials in the last two weeks.

- NESAs did a typescript for Secretary of Defense Weinberger on Prospects for and Consequences of Increasing PLO Terrorism and Israeli Retaliation.

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-- The OGI, NESA and EURA offices are currently coordinating a typescript on the Achille Lauro incident for the National Security Council.

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25X1Talking Points for the ADDIForeign Policy Implications for Italy of the Hijacking

The hijacking of the Achille Lauro has been one of the most serious international challenges that any Italian government has faced in the postwar period. It brought down a stable governments whose foreign policy was characterized by strong support for both NATO and the US. [REDACTED]

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The crisis has driven home to Italian leaders and public that Italian interests and American interests will not always coincide. Italy's ties with US and NATO have been keystone of postwar Italian policy. [REDACTED]

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Prime Minister Craxi, Foreign Minister Andreotti, and Defense Minister Spadolini are all determined to maintain Italy's ties to NATO and US, but Craxi and Andreotti are more ready to break with the US on specific issues, especially the Middle East. [REDACTED]

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